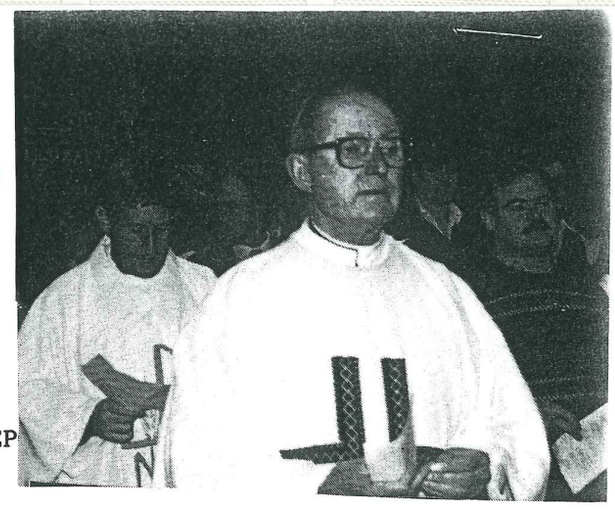
I/R DETAILING BACKGROUND & USUAL M.O. OF SEARSON. FILE N.O.D DUE TO VICTIMS NOT WILLING TO TAKE MATTER FURTHER.



INFORMATION REP

SUBJECT: **Priest SEARSON**

SOURCE: anon

RECEIVED BY: Sgt Carroll

DATE RECEIVED: 30.11.90

REFERENCE NO: **018590**

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STATES: Anon letter received containing the following:

Well nothing has eventuated from the previous letter about the Priest Searson from Doveton who is molesting the children in the confessional among other things.

Would seem that you would sooner sweep it under the carpet irrespective of what happens to the children now or in the future.

Well perhaps it may be better to wait until something more drastic happens.

Wonder why you haven't made some form of enquiry like trying to locate the Principal (Sleeman) who tried and had a break down as a result, believe he is in Gippsland somewhere and still on work care and attending "shrinks". The Priest must have you all bluffed or is it that you don't want to bring the Church down.

It is the action of an individual, not the Church.

Will you wait and dismiss the claim as false this timeor put it aside until some parent goes along and shoots the bastard.

Make some enquiries you fools, ask a few questions of the teachers why Sleeman left, ask Sleeman himself, speak to some parents about the matter. There is more than what you may think.

This letter was origninally sent to the Truth Newspaper .

13.12.90 UPDATE Obtained first letter from S/C RYNHART. First letter stated such:

Around two years ago a school at Doveton wasthe subject of many media reporters trying to find out the problem that existed in this Catholic School, but it was surpressed to save the image of the Catholic Organisation.

The problem that existed was the missappropriation of funds by the Priest and the molesting of children by the Priest. The parents put their faith in the Principal of the school who eventualy went to th Bishop and conveyed to him what was happening and was told to return and resolve the matter himself.

The principal (Mr Sleeman) suffered a nervous breakdown and attended apparently many (shrinks) Doctors but his complaints fell on deaf ears and today the problem still exists of Father Searson still taking the children to the Confessional sitting them on his lap (Boys & Girls alike) and playing with their private parts to say the least. God only knows what else he may be doing to them.

Apparently nothing has been done about this Priest who has since that time built another church in recognition to himself.

He was apparently at Sunbury prior to coming to Doveton and they were ever so glad to get rid of him.

He is said to be ex Army somehow and still has in his possession an Army Revolver which he quite often brandishes.

The parents of the victims put their faith in the Principal, but since he was unable to do anything and broke down as a result of the whole sordid deal, other teachers are more afraid that he was and are prepared to let "sleeping dogs lie" or turn a blind eye to the matter. After all who could believe, the Priest or someone who is trying to cause trouble for him.

The Priest is a liar and very cunning man who suceeded in the removal of someone who was a threat to him, but should you be successful in locating the Principal, he may now have a change of heart.

It is never-the-less shameful that a man (correction) an animalcan take advantage of the garment he wears to take out his sordid sex acts on children and get away with it since this event. What harm is he doing to the children, how will it affect their lives in the future. PLEASE FOR GOD'S SAKE DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS MATTER.

This letter was sent to HSV 7 (attention Pamela Graeme)

Contacted the Principal of the school, Mr. Graeme SLEEMAN, who is now living in Longford at the Longford General Store, RMB 6016 South Gippsland Highway, Longford. Phone (051) 497 320. Sleeman confirmrd a lot of the information in the letter, stating the school that he used to teach in was The Holy Family Catholic Church and School, Power Road, DOVETON. Phone: , and that he had to resign from his position as the school principal because he had a nervous breakdown. This breakdown was due to the investigation that he undertook about SEARSON.

Sleeman also stated that SEARSON was also a Minister of Religion at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, in Sunbury (Next door tto the Sunbury Police Station). SEARSON left this school to go to Doveton over the same type of allegations that have been made against him at his current school. Supposedly, a nun at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel took up the investigation over these allegations and ended up wiht the same result as SLEEMAN, a nervous breakdown. The nuns name is Sister Mary GAVIGAN (or similar). Sleeman suggested that we do not talk to any other person regarding the case till we talk to him, as he has a file about the whole situation that he believes will be of great assistance to us.

Apparently this whole episode has ruined SLEEMANS life, he had a nervous breakdown, and was forced to leave his job, had reporters from Hinch chasing him for his story, and eventually had to leave Melbourne. He states that on whats left of his file, he should have names of victims, parents of the victims, and teachers at the school who knew what SEARSON was up to. Have organised to attend at his home address in Longford with S/C RYNHART to obtain as muchinformation as possible about the whole sorry affair.

Also attempted to contact any Member at Sunbury Police Station who was working during the affair in about 1984 - 85.

Suspects Details:
NAME: Peter Lloyd Anthony SEARSON
ADDR: REDACTED Doveton
DOB : 04.04.23
IBR ; REDACT as REDACTED
REDACTED Dandenong.
(Priors attached)
ELECT: Employed as Minister of Religion at REDACTED since 30.03.84. DOB: 04.04.23

G&F : To be done
TELE: To be done

14.12.90 UPDATE Attended at Sleemans home address in Longford with S/C RYNHART and spoke in lenght to Sleeman about what he knew of the priest.

SLEEMAN originally went to the Holy Family Catholic Church in the early 1980's. At this time the school was in rack and ruin, with vandalism costing $20,000 dollars a year, truancy running at 75%, however after 1 year SLEEMAN had turned this around to vandalism costing $5.00 a year, and truancy almost non existant. Although he stated that some of his mothods were not 'by the book', the Catholic Education Organization (CEO) were impressed with his work as was the families of all of the children who attended at the school.

After Sleeman had spent a year at the school and all was running well, he was informed that a priest by the name of Father Peter Lloyd SEARSON was coming to replace the outgoing parish priest. Sleeman was informed by many people, other preists included, that he should be very carefull with searson because he had caused a lot of trouble at the previous parish that he was at, Our lady of St. Carmel in Sunbury, and was the cause of one of the nuns at this establishments nervous breakdown. It is said that the same allegation came forward about SEARSON in Sunbury as they did in Doveton, and the nun tried to solve the problem and convince people of his acts, however she went down instead of him. As Sleeman stated to me, he did not hear one good word about SEARSON before he came to Doveton.

When SEARSON arrived at Doveton, the school was apparently being run very well (as stated before) with the familys and students taking a lot of pride in their school. It was used by all during the day, and sometimes in the evening,(365 days a year) and could be classed as a 24 hour school. Apparently SEARSON did not like this idea and almost immediately on his arrival he erected an 8 ft fence right around the perimeter of the school. Almost as soon as this was done the school started to experience burglaries, vandalism and the like. He also started to rub both students, teachers, and parents up the wrong way, supposedly treating his Blue Heeler dog 'REX' better than he treated any persons at the school.

Within a short time rumors staretd to fly within the school about SEARSON touching up children, taking money from the school funds, and basically ruining all the good work that Sleeman and his colleagues had done. The school started going downhill very quickly because of his interference in the running of the school, in both the financial and the academic way. There have also been allegations from various members within the school of pilfering money from the school coffers. An example of this is that the priest SEARSON has just built a church that no one in the parish wanted, nor did they think they could afford, and as word has it SEARSON had to provide $500,000 in cash up front before building could commence.

Even though all of this was going on, there was nothing the members from

Even though all of this was going on, there was nothing the members from the school(i.e. principal, accountant etc) could do.

The Catholic church system is run in the way that SEARSON is appointed as the Parish Manager, and in this position he has the sole right to hire and fire, thus his hold over the teachers, and the hierachy in town are powerless to do anything about his action unless they are proved to be Moraal or financially outragous, and as it is known in the Catholic church system, this never really happens (or so they chose to believe).

Peter WILLIAMS, the Parish Accountant, Does not even have full access to all of the Parish Books, he only sees the ones that SEARSON wants him to see.

On the subject of sexual assaults, I have spoken to Senior Sergeant Stephen VAUGHAN, and he has provided me with scant details of a couple of incidents that have happened over the past couple of years.

The first incident involved a young girl called Julie STEWART and supposedly happened about 2 years ago. STEWART was taken into the confessional box by SEARSON and came out shortly after in hysterics. She was spoken to by a teacher called Shirley BARRETT and apparently allegations of indecent assault were detailed to her by the child. The exact details of this complaint are not known just yet, however the mothers details are to be obtained for me by Senior Sergeant VAUGHAN. The childs mother was then informed of these allegations who subsequently went to the principal. SLEEMAN informed Mrs. STEWART to write a letter of complaint to Arch Bishop Frank LITTLE, detailing her complaint, and if possible to go in and see him about the same, as there was nothing he could do about it.

Mrs. STEWART, in company of two other parents, Mrs. REDACTED of REDACTED Doveton, Phone:REDACT, and Mrs REDAC attendfed at the Arch Diasis Office in East Melbourne and apparently saw a manilla folder full of complaint letters on the Arch Bishops office about SEARSON. The Arch Bishop told the parents that he would speak to SEARSON abnout the complaints about him which he did.

SEARSON was then summonsed to speak to the Arch Bishop who gave him a rap over the knuckles and told him that he was not allowed to sit young children on his knee in the confessional box. Other than this, there seems to be no other form of restrictions placed on SEARSON by the heirarchy in the Catholic Church. As it seems from this they seem to want to sweep it under the carpet and pretend it doesnt exist.

Another incident that involved the priest was one with two young boys who cleaned the school after hours. The boys, REDACTE exact names not known, were cleaning the school one night when they were confronted by SEARSON who was brandishing a revolver. SEARSON stated to the boys that he thought that they were intruders in the school and he apologized to them for acting in such a way. Word has it that SEARSON knew that it was the boys that were in the school that evening, but because he had an intense dislike for the boys and their mother, he was trying to scare them out of their job so that he could employ who he wanted. Dandenong Police were informed of this instance and in due course executed a warrant on the premises trying to locate the firearm. They never did. SEARSON does not have a shooters licence and by confronting the boys, succeedesd in doing what he had hoped. Very shortly after, both boys quit their jobs at the school. S/Sgt. VAUGHAN has not heard any more about the firearm or any sightings of it in the last year, however he believes that it does exist and will be sighted again.

S/Sgt. VAUGHAN knows that ther was an allegation of sexual assault against SEARSON only a short time ago but does not know the full details of it. He will speak to his wife about it andd try to get more info for me on 18th December when I hope to be able to speak to him at length about it.

CONTACTS: REDACTED
REDACTED Doveton
REDACTED
(Victims mother)

Senior Sergeant Stephen VAUGHAN
C/O TAS 380 7330
(Former President of Parents & Friends Assoc.)
Wife still heavily envolved in the school

Helen & Julie (DOB:03.09.75) STEWART
REDACTED Dandenong
791 1640
Daughter Julie was a victim of SEARSON

Shirley BARRETT
C/O Holy Family Catholic Church
792 4317
Saw STEWART child after Sexual assault.

Mrs REDACTED
Add. and phone not known at this stage.
Mother of children who were confronted by SEARSON when he produced the firearm.

Marie BRASHER
4 Montgomery Avenue, Mt. Waverley
(H) 233 2675 (W)791 1853
teacher at school at time of alledged offences.
First person to speak to STEWART after offence
Apparently leaving for Canberra ot the end of 1990.

Will attempt to see S/Sgt VAUGHAN on 18th Dec.

19.12.90 UPDATE

Contacted Fraud Squad to explain the situation regarding what is happening to the money in the parish and to ask advice. Spoke to Laurel TAYLOR who stated that if more information came to hand about the mismanagement of funds etc. from the school coffers, and a complaint was laid by someone in a position of authority (ie Parish accountant, principal) they would probably be able to help us out.

They have two investigative accountants in the squad, Dave MORRISON 865 2593, and Mark SPITTLE 865 2597, who would be able to help us. Will obtain more info and ring Laurel for more advice. Also stated to find if the schools accounts are on computer, re: 'dumping' information.

Attended and spoke to Vice principal Shirley BARRETT who told me a lot about SEARSONS activities in and about the school.

Apparently BARRETT knew SEARSON from Sunbury, so she knew of his exploits in that area. BARRETT stated that she personally had heard all of the innuendo floating about the school about his liking for young boys and girls, but could provide no concrete facts or victims about the same. However she pointed at several facts that lead her to believe her instincts.

Approximately 4 - 6 years ago BARRETT found two young girls walking out of the school church. When she approached the girls and asked them what they had been doing, they stated that they had been doing hand stands in the church because Father had asked them to show him how they do them. This has supposedly happened on a few occasions, and now the teachers have told the children never to go and see father by themselves, but to go in groups of two or more.

BARRETT also knew of an incident with a young girl called Julie STEWART but did not know the exact details, nor had she spoken to the young girl about the incident, but because STEWART was taken out of the school by her mother shortly after the incident, she assumed that something sexual had happened to the girl.

The incident went as such.

Julie STEWART was in Grade 5 at the time and one class of theirs was to go to the church and have reconcilliation. Julie was called in to the confessional by Father SEARSON who sat her on his knee. She made her hold his hand and eventually exposed his penis and made her play with it. Shortly after this, Julie ran out of the confessional in hysterics. She apparently ran out to a teacher called Marie BRASHER and told her the story. At this stage I have not been in contact with either the victim or BRASHER, but was told of this story by BTV Julie STEWARTS best friend.

I attended at BTV home and she told me what STEWART had told her and also stated that all of the children had to sit on fathers lap during reconcilliation and hold his hand. She also told me that father asked her if she loved him.

After this incident (mid 1986?) father was spoken to by Arch Bishop Frank LITTLE who told him that he was not to have reconcilliation with the children on their own but was to conduct it as a group. Apparently he abided by this rule for a short time but is now taking reconcilliation on his own and sitting the children on his knee again.

BARRETT deailed many other events that have taken place at the school, however none have disclosed any offences of a sexual nature on the children, but more his ability to manipulate the parish funds, children, their parents, and teachers alike.

There have been incidents where SEARSON has struck a child over the head with a clip board, where he has physically assaulted (by pushing etc) a mother for not paying her school fees and many others.

Word has it that when the Doveton Post Office was being renovated, SEARSON rented one of the school portables to Post Office. Although it is known that money was recieved from the Post Office, BARRETT has stated that noboby in the school has ever sighted receipts, let alone the money. No one seems to know what has happened to it.

Another incident of intrest is when SEARSON took 4 Grade 6 boys into the church where there was a dead body. In the catholic Church, during a funeral and with the families permission, the body can be viewed. This body was under a cloth, and after standing the boys aroud the table pulled the cloth from the face and told the boys, "Thats what your going to look like when your dead". After this incident, two of the boys were very distressed, having nightmares etc for some time. Although this is not a criminal offence, it should enlarge the picture of what SEARSON is like.

BARRETT gave me a few more contacts to speak to in relation to the matters.

Meg GREEN. Social worker at the school at the time of the STEWART incident. Now works at the ANZ Bank somewhere

Raymer WARD. Social worker at Doveton Primary School.

Norm LAWLER. Regional Consultant

Contact Phone Numbers for all these to be obtained by BARRETT.

Also stated that Dot LANE, School Secretary, has a great deal of knowledge of what money has gone missing and will talk to Police about it.
Address: REDACTED, Endeavor Hills.
Phone: REDACTED

24.12.90 UPDATE Spoke with Det. S/Sgt Ian CAMERON of EDG C.I.B who stated that SEARSON supposedly handed an ex army revolver in to Doveton Police about 8 months ago. Will check this up to confirm it.

Also spoke with Robin MULLINDER (756 6696) who was the C.P.S officer for the area about 3 years ago (now out of the job). Stated that there should be a lot of children who have been molested in the same way that STEWART has been molested, however she said that there may be trouble in getting more than 1 complaint because SEARSON picks on REDACTE children who are not very well off. Also because the REDACTED are so head strong on their religion, they are to scared to make a complaint about him because they believe that he will kick them out of the school and the parish should they complain about him.

Also spoke to Meg GREEN(w:658 1143), social worker for the area about the time that MULLINDER was around, and she stated the same that MULLINDER did. Mainly that there were large amounts of children that made it known that they were molested, but would not make a formal complaint about it.

Both MULLINDER and GREEN stated that they would get their heads together and attempt to obtain same names of children that have been touched up by SEARSON and would get back to me on the same. One name they gave me was a young girl by the name of REDACTED Will attempt to check this out.